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Author tells about life as 'diplomat'

By IRENE NOLAN
Courier-Journal Staff Writer

About halfway through his tour of duty in Afghanistan with the United States Information Service, the rumors began circulating among the Afghans that Robert Trautman was a spy for the Central Intelligence Agency.

"How could anyone think I was a spy with you as a wife?" was Trautman's amazed comment to his wife, Kathleen, referring to her reputation for being "outspoken."

Mrs. Trautman broke into laughter as she told the story of how, after a stag party her husband attended at the Russian Embassy, the family was boycotted by the Afghans for months because of the suspicion that he was a CIA agent. But, in Afghanistan, Mrs. Trautman said, one never really knows who the spies are.

She lived in Louisville

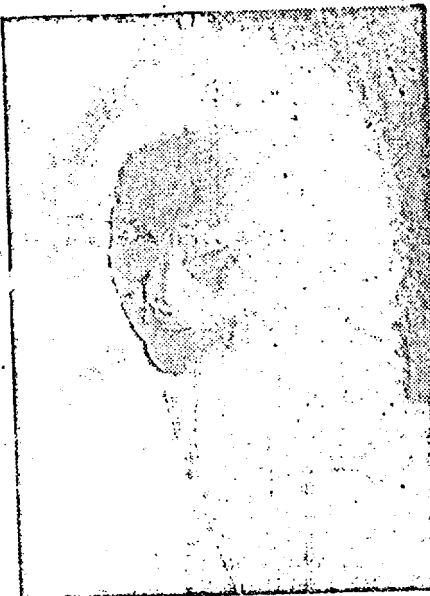
Mrs. Trautman, a 39-year-old former Louisville resident and mother of three, includes the spy incident and other experiences the family had during their year-long tour of duty in the "hardship" post of Afghanistan in her first book, "Spies Behind the Pillars, Bandits at the Pass." It is the story of the Trautmans in diplomatic circles, which they decided after their year in Afghanistan, wasn't for them.

Trautman, a staff writer for The Courier-Journal for three years, joined the United States Information Agency in 1965. After two years in Washington, he was told he would be stationed in Beirut and he was given extensive French lessons. Three months before they were to leave, the Trautmans were told they would be going to Afghanistan instead.

Under constant scrutiny

So in 1967, Kathleen Trautman was settling her family into a country where the language was foreign to them, drainage ditches served as the municipal sewer system, and their conduct as representatives of America was under constant scrutiny.

At that time, a report on the wife was included in the foreign service officer's fitness report. The policy has since been changed, but Kathleen Trautman found herself being constantly chastised by other wives for her outspokenness at cocktail parties.



Staff Photo

Kathleen Trautman has written a book about her family's experiences in Afghanistan.

government or her husband, she was told.

Mrs. Trautman thought it was important for people to know that there was free speech in America. She would comment on the fact that not everyone agreed with U.S. policy in Vietnam, while other officials "turned the conversation to rose bushes when the subject came up."

Mrs. Trautman said their mission in Afghanistan was to inform the Afghans about the United States. And that, she said, meant entertaining the affluent, educated Afghan minority because "they had the power." The Afghans were similarly entertained by representatives from other countries in a constant round of cocktail parties at various embassies.

"They were all alike, Bob said. The only difference was that the Russians served vodka and we served gin."

Cook spoke English

The Trautmans were lucky enough to have a cook who spoke English well enough to take them on tours of the countryside while other diplomats stuck with the American community.

Trautman has been with the British news agency Reuters since he left the USIA in 1968. The family lives in Bethesda, Md. Mrs. Trautman has already started working on her second book, "I'd Love to Go Around the World With You But I Have To Go to the Dentist." She said it's about "being 40."

She has also published several stories in children's magazines, and for two years, while her husband was stationed in Washington, was a research assistant in Kentucky Sen. John Sherman Cooper's

STATINTL

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The spies bumped into each other in Afghanistan

By WAUHILLAU LA HAY

Scripps-Howard Staff Writer

Kathleen Trautman has lovely red hair, alluring green eyes and what she describes as a "big flannel mouth."

It's this last feature that is soon to give the federal government's foreign service establishment fits.

For Mrs. Trautman, until recently a foreign service wife, has written a book. It's called "Spies Behind the Pillars, Bandits at the Pass," and is due on the bookshelves late this month.

It's based on her life in Afghanistan, where husband Robert Trautman was our embassy's U.S. Information Agency officer.

She found it a great adventure. Travel to exotic places. Fascinating new friends. But also a scene that called for more than a bit of debunking.

For instance: One chapter in her book, sure to disconcert our cloak-and-dagger department, is titled: "The CIA and other Disasters."

Of Afghanistan she writes: "Green grapes and rugs are two of Afghanistan's major exports. Her major import, I suspect, is spies. There are so many of them bumping into each other that at times it was hard to take them seriously."

She reports her husband, now the White House correspondent for a British press service agrees. It was his estimate, she says, that Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, must have been either the place where old spies retired or inept ones were banished.

Nor is she one to keep silent about what too often has been the lot of the junior foreign service officers and their wives. She writes:

"People who survive are not outspoken. They work for 25 years without having an opinion said they're on top. Bright, really terrific young junior officers are put to work stamping visas. They never get to make a decision, so



Kathleen Trautman

they give up, resign and go into private business."

Kathleen Cale Trautman is a native Kansan. Her husband comes from Wisconsin. They married just before his Marine Division went to Korea. Now the Trautmans have two sons, Max, soon to be 14, and Karl, 12. Daughter Samantha, 2½, was born shortly after the family left Afghanistan.

The Trautmans' adventures in Afghanistan, with side trips to Russia, Iran, India and Pakistan, make good reading. Katie's blasts at the Foreign Service are written in good humor and, of course, she has changed names freely.

"Nobody will recognize anybody," said Katie. "Unless, of course, they were there at the time or ran up against the same people at another post."